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Policy 106 - Continuous Quality Improvement

A. POLICY

Child welfare system health is a perpetual process of systematically collecting objective and qualitative metrics, shared with stakeholders, and used to steer practices to improve safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for at-risk children and their families.

B. PROCEDURES

1. The Division of Family Services (DFS) objectively, systematically, and continuously assesses, monitors, evaluates, and improves the quality of processes, activities, programs, and services provided to child welfare populations. This requires establishing agency-wide goals, specific program goals, objectives, and performance metrics; and includes training staff in continuous quality improvement methods and tools.
2. These principles steer continuous quality improvement (CQI)
 - a. Quality is the degree to which policies, programs and services for child welfare children and families provide safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.
 - b. Agency direction and priorities are a balanced collection of mandates and stakeholder input.
 - c. The agency promotes a learning environment where work is valued and respected, regardless of level of experience, and focuses on quality service delivery.
 - d. Agency and stakeholders hold similar values and beliefs that prioritize protection of children from abuse and neglect, promote permanent living arrangements and build family capacity to meet their own needs.
 - e. Outcome and process performance can always improve.
 - f. Success is measured by quantitative and qualitative data.
 - g. Agency decisions are data informed.
 - h. All levels of agency personnel contribute to continuous quality improvement.
 - i. Change management is a systematic approach to implement changes in agency structure and individual practice using planned strategies, procedures, resources, tools, and technology.
 - j. Organizational culture refers to the shared behavioral expectations and norms in a work environment. This is the collective view of “the way work is done.”
 - k. Organizational climate represents staff perceptions of the impact of the work environment on the individual. This is the view of “how it feels” to work at the agency.
 - l. Adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing groups of people to close gaps or conflicts between shared values and reality to produce better outcomes.
3. DFS applies a defined improvement process, such as Plan-Do-Study-Act, that focuses on activities responsive to stakeholder concerns and improve outcomes.

4. To execute this policy, DFS establishes an organizational structure for overseeing and guiding CQI activities.
5. The Director assigns a CQI Manager who supervises case reviewers, data specialists and oversees CQI activities.
6. DFS establishes a Steering Committee with representatives from various levels of agency staff. Committee membership is determined by the Manager and agency leadership.
7. Roles and responsibilities of leadership, management, staff, and stakeholders:
 - a. Agency leadership champions and promotes continuous quality improvement activities within all levels of agency staff and with community partners.
 - b. Agency leadership sanctions CQI training for all levels of staff and community partners.
 - c. CQI Administrator provides oversight and ensures CQI information sharing across all levels of the division.
 - d. Agency operations and program managers use CQI principles and tools to review key process and outcome performance measures, adjusting processes, FOCUS (For Our Children's Ultimate Success), policy and procedures as indicated.
 - e. Front line caseworkers and supervisors use case management best practices, technology, and tools to achieve positive outcomes for children and families. Their role is also to contribute to the learning environment informing managers and leadership of barriers and successes.
 - f. Data analyst team queries system elements and builds reports on general and specific areas of process and outcome.
 - g. Quality assurance case reviewers evaluate sampled or identified cases using approved tools.
 - h. Community service partners carry out vital and mutual mission and operations, participating in outcome performance review and improvement.
 - i. Stakeholders such as parents, youth, advocates, attorneys, and judges contribute to the learning environment by sharing experiences and providing input on outcome performance.
8. Quality improvement activities may be documented by work plans with distinct components such as goals, objectives, action steps, persons responsible, timeframes, process measures and resources.
9. These methods are used to evaluate processes, programs, and services to identify opportunities for improvement within the context of continuous quality improvement and a learning environment:
 - a. Case Reviews
 - i. On Site Review Instrument (OSRI) Reviews
 - A. Tool based review of sampled cases with key participant interviews
 - B. Sampling and reviews are conducted using methodologies and criteria established in the Case Review Procedure Guide
 - ii. FOCUS based reviews of investigation and differential response cases
 - b. Targeted case analysis
 - c. System Reports
 - d. Customer input (surveys, focus groups, questionnaires)
 - e. Stakeholder input (existing or new forums)
 - f. Ad hoc committees for specific inquiries and practice related topics

10. Communications inform staff of opportunities to participate in review, planning, and implementation activities. Regular communication on planning, practice implementation and outcomes promote a learning environment. Communication methods include:
 - a. Global and targeted emails
 - b. Reports on improvement activities
 - c. Committee minutes
 - d. Staff meetings and presentations
 - e. Community meetings and presentations

11. The agency uses the Plan-Do-Study-Act or other recognized CQI frameworks to implement practice improvements.

12. Continuous quality improvement occurs in distinct quality review processes and in daily front line, management, and leadership activities such as:
 - a. Program Workgroups
 - b. Strategic Leadership Team
 - c. Quality Circles
 - d. Contractor meetings
 - e. Child Protection Accountability Commission meetings
 - f. Court Improvement Program meetings
 - g. Supervisor-caseworker case conferences
 - h. Case specific group supervision
 - i. Regional supervisor meetings
 - j. Statewide all-management meetings
 - k. Operations and program support management meetings

13. The agency provides a mandatory online overview training of CQI principles, process, and procedure for all DFS staff through the Delaware Learning Center. Quality assurance case reviewers complete both online and in person training in implementing the Onsite Review Instrument.

14. Agency strategic evaluation and planning activities, such as the Child and Family Services Plan, Child and Family Services Review, and workforce organization, incorporates CQI principles and processes to enhance positive outcomes for children and families.

15. The agency maintains a data inventory, listing available system generated reports by title, location, schedule, and subject matter. The inventory includes:
 - a. Case Reviews
 - i. Online monitoring system case reviews and reports
 - ii. Investigation tool
 - b. Data Profile National Standards
 - c. FOCUS Reports
 - d. Child Protection Accountability Commission Dashboard

C. FOCUS

Case reviewers complete the investigation tool in FOCUS

D. FORMS

None